

***Remarks***

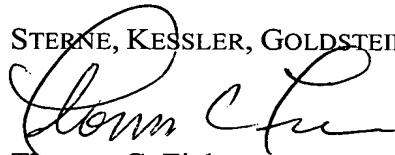
Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 8-25 are pending in the application, with claims 8, 13 and 18 being the independent claims. Claims 8, 13, 15, 17 and 18 have been amended and new claims 23-25 have been added. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

***Conclusion***

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested. Applicants believe the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.



Thomas C. Fiala  
Attorney for Applicants  
Registration No. 43,610

Date: 2/17/04

1100 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934  
(202) 371-2600